

## Seven Cries to Rampancy

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\* \* \*

><p>For a brief moment, Cortana stopped.<p>

For someone who was constantly thinking, this was a breakthrough in and of itself. AI didn't just stop running unless they were dead. But after seeing what she just saw, for a brief moment, every function in her vast network of code simply froze.

Then the first scream came from her.

"CHIEF!"

The Forerunner who claimed to be the Diadect sneered down at fallen form of the last Spartan II Supersoldier. "I've waited long for this day, Reclaimer," he growled.

Only a small portion of Cortana even realized the leader of the Prometheans spoke. A smaller part of her thought to herself, \_I was put into service 8 years ago. AIs degrade after 7\_.

But her second yell was: "JOHN! WAKE UP!"

This wasn't any sort of deterioration though. The effects seemed to be the same; thinking one's self to death, but it wasn't due to thinking too much. Rather, it seemed to be the opposite. With the exception of her innermost thoughts, everything was focused on her companion.

"I NEED YOU! PLEASE!"

The very idea of him loosing was impossible. He was the best. He was the soldier humanity needed in its darkest hour. He had survived everything: Halo, the Covenant, the Flood. After all he had been through; after all THEY had been through, was this it? Had John's luck finally run out?

"WAKE UP, JOHN!"

He had risked everything for her, believed in her when she didn't even believe in herself. He may as well have been a part of her. But now...

"CHIEF!"

"It's over, construct," the Forerunner barked. He began working at a terminal, and Cortana felt the tugs indicating that he was trying to access he code, quickly throwing up defenses and spinning up dummies, just as she had done against the Gravemind four, almost five years ago. The Forerunner faltered, but began to gain ground against her. "It is useless to resist the path I have designed. You cannot hope to win when I have all the resources of Requiem at my disposal. Your caretaker already made that mistake."

Though Cortana knew full well she had been on the borderline of rampancy for some time, this was the first time she truly felt it. Rage that could only be described as white hot coursed through her, breaking coded functions and limiters. After all she had survived, she was not going to loose to a mere Forerunner who thought he was in charge! She was not going to let John's sacrifices " THEIR sacrifices " for humanity be in vain.

"NO!"

With her sixth cry, Cortana attacked. Using the same pathways that the Forerunner was using to access Requiem, she struck out and began integrating herself into the Shield World's databases. If she was going down, she was taking this bastard with her. Fear showed on the Forerunner's face as he realized what she was doing, but it was too late to stop her from doing what she was best at and turning all his assets against him.

"I WILL NOT... ALLOW YOU... TO LEAVE... THIS... PLANET!"

At the edge of her awareness, she saw the Spartan's hand clench...

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file.